

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE

## REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-01881a. REPORT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION  
UNCLASSIFIED

1b. RESTRICTIVE MARKINGS

NONE

AD-A217 453

E

(S)

3. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF REPORT  
APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE;  
DISTRIBUTION UNLIMITED.

5. MONITORING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER(S)

AFIT/CI/CIA- 89-112

6a. NAME OF PERFORMING ORGANIZATION

AFIT STUDENT AT  
Univ of TX Austin6b. OFFICE SYMBOL  
(if applicable)

7a. NAME OF MONITORING ORGANIZATION

AFIT/CIA

6c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)

7b. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)

Wright-Patterson AFB OH 45433-6583

8a. NAME OF FUNDING / SPONSORING  
ORGANIZATION8b. OFFICE SYMBOL  
(if applicable)

9. PROCUREMENT INSTRUMENT IDENTIFICATION NUMBER

8c. ADDRESS (City, State, and ZIP Code)

10. SOURCE OF FUNDING NUMBERS

PROGRAM  
ELEMENT NO.PROJECT  
NO.TASK  
NO.WORK UNIT  
ACCESSION NO.

11. TITLE (Include Security Classification) (UNCLASSIFIED)

CHARLOTTE TEMPLE: MAPPING SOCIAL STATUS THROUGH GENDER AND VALUE SYSTEMS

12. PERSONAL AUTHOR(S)

ELISE ANNE ROWE

13a. TYPE OF REPORT

THESIS/ ~~DISSERTATION~~

13b. TIME COVERED

FROM \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_

14. DATE OF REPORT (Year, Month, Day)

1989

15. PAGE COUNT

32

16. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTATION

APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE IAW AFR 190-1

ERNEST A. HAYGOOD, 1st Lt, USAF

Executive Officer, Civilian Institution Programs

17. COSATI CODES

FIELD

GROUP

SUB-GROUP

18. SUBJECT TERMS (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)

19. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse if necessary and identify by block number)

DTIC  
ELECTE  
JAN 31 1990  
S E D

90 01 31 012

20. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY OF ABSTRACT

☒ UNCLASSIFIED/UNLIMITED ☐ SAME AS RPT. ☐ DTIC USERS

21. ABSTRACT SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

UNCLASSIFIED

22a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL

ERNEST A. HAYGOOD, 1st Lt, USAF

22b. TELEPHONE (Include Area Code)

(513) 255-2259

22c. OFFICE SYMBOL

AFIT/CI

8-112

CHARLOTTE TEMPLE: MAPPING SOCIAL STATUS  
THROUGH GENDER AND VALUE SYSTEMS

ELISE ANNE ROWE, B.A.

Captain, USAF

1989

32 pages

Master of Arts

University of Texas at Austin

↙ Susanna Rowson has been viewed as a minor writer of the Eighteenth Century, while her novel Charlotte Temple has been dismissed as overly sentimental by modern critics. However, the novel can be interpreted as a "survival manual" for the women of Rowson's time, which was her stated intent in writing the novel. It serves as a guide and key to the social and cultural pitfalls inherent in the gender-based division between monetary and moral values, and the cultural institutions which perpetuated it.

Although Rowson emphasizes the female-oriented social rules known as morals, she carefully analyzes the male-dominated economics which underwrite them, thereby giving women a worldly education which their upbringing denied them. Her method targeted women's subordinate position in a medium and manner which enabled her to reach her female readers without overtly challenging society's established structure. (SUN)

PRIMARY SOURCE

Davidson, Cathy N. Revolution and the Word (New York: Oxford UP, 1986)

SECONDARY SOURCES

Baym, Nina. Woman's Fiction (New York: Cornell University, 1978)

Fiedler, Leslie. Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: Stein and Day, 1966)

Parker, Patricia L. Susanna Rowson (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986)

Petter, Henri. The Early American Novel (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1971)

Tanner, Tony. Adultery in the Novel (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1979)

CHARLOTTE TEMPLE: MAPPING SOCIAL STATUS  
THROUGH GENDER AND VALUE SYSTEMS



Accession For	
NTIS GRA&I	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DTIC TAB	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unannounced	<input type="checkbox"/>
Justification	
By _____	
Distribution/	
Availability Codes	
Dist	Avail and/or Special
A-1	

APPROVED:

Supervisor:

W. J. Scheick  
William J. Scheick

Alan Gribben  
Alan Gribben

CHARLOTTE TEMPLE: MAPPING SOCIAL STATUS  
THROUGH GENDER AND VALUE SYSTEMS

by

ELISE ANNE ROWE, B.A.

REPORT

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
The University of Texas at Austin  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

May 1989

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Section I	3
Section II	9
Section III	17
Section IV	21
Notes	28

Susanna Rowson, the 18th-Century author of Charlotte Temple, has been viewed as a "third rate sentimentalist," <sup>1</sup> "a minor writer...who lacked the imagination and inventiveness needed to inform other material." <sup>2</sup> The novel itself has been described as a portrait of the American woman's self-image as the "long-suffering martyr of love--the inevitable victim of male brutality and lust"; <sup>3</sup> and a "deliberate collection of the ingredients that went into the making of an average novel designed to be fashionably successful." <sup>4</sup>

Despite these critical opinions, Rowson's Charlotte Temple fulfilled its author's stated intent of providing her readers with a guide to social values. The novel, which appeared in over 200 editions, <sup>5</sup> also dissected the structure of the society that created those values.

Rowson, who was concerned about young women's "mistaken education" regarding behavior between the sexes, <sup>6</sup> avowedly hoped she would "save one hapless fair one from the errors which ruined poor Charlotte." <sup>7</sup>

Charlotte's ruin, brought about by her sexual seduction, is used as a vehicle to convey moral values essential not only for women's survival and security

in society, but to control and direct American society itself. However, while the novel exalts moral values, the behavior of the novel's characters is ultimately controlled and defined by monetary values, through which people and things are rated by their market worth. Also, the moral values that Rowson emphasizes are presented as the primary determinants of women's behavior, while men, whose actions motivate the novel's plot, are guided principally by monetary values. Thus Charlotte Temple is not only a moral guide; it also reflects the supremacy of male-dominated economics as the motivation for social relations and an empowerment of the subordinate, female-oriented social rules known as "morals."

The term "value" represents the interdependent monetary and moral standards of Rowson's novel; it refers to concrete amounts and abstract principles directing the characters' actions. It defines and encompasses the point of confusion and contention between these economic and social forces, as foregrounded through the novel's treatment of seduction and marriage. These social features ultimately highlight the "devaluation" of moral values in the interests of the monetary ones that produced

them. Therefore, while Charlotte Temple appears to reinforce the existing social system, Rowson attacks it on its own terms and reveals its inherent inconsistencies.

# I

Seduction and marriage are used to explore the societal structure which underwrites men's subversion and reinforcement, respectively, of moral values. Both are, in reality, a means of circumventing the moral values inculcated in women. Seduction allows men to elude the moral values which constrain women while retaining their own social value in monetary terms, while marriage allows them to extend their economic monopoly by consolidating the monetary assets a wife brings to marriage. In contrast to men's ability to play both markets, women must ensure their access to marriage by investing in the moral values which society--and their prospective husbands--demand. The comparative social freedom which men enjoy is ensured--and insured--by their ability to corrupt or destroy morality themselves and to compel it in women. The foundation for this division in moral and financial investment lies in the structure of the society which created it.



Men, as the physically and economically dominant sex, control the monetary value system at all levels of society, from the family unit at the base of the societal structure to the highest levels of political control. According to 18th-Century account books and contemporary diaries, for example, "men did (or were credited with doing) most of the purchasing in the early national period,"<sup>8</sup> although women contributed to the economy through domestic or factory work, teaching, and household manufacture.<sup>9</sup>

Women's economic participation was generally within the dominion of their husbands.<sup>10</sup> While men were producing economic goods and being paid for their labor, women were generally unpaid, voluntary laborers. They were representatives of the home, which was perceived by society as a domestic haven from worldly cares. Safe in her home, the woman was supposedly happy and maternal, unaffected by worldly knowledge. Her moral influence was thought to dominate the home, from which it expanded outward and created a "value scheme for all of life, in competition with the ethos of money and exploitation."<sup>11</sup>

This domestic ideal "gave women ... a way of thinking about their work that redeemed the

particularities of daily existence and conferred on them a larger meaning in which home and the world became one." <sup>12</sup> While such a perception helped women feel more influential in their roles, in contrast to a world "dominated by money and market considerations," <sup>13</sup> it also worked to ensure women's support of society's existing system in which they were subordinate. Men thus literally "owned the signs that defined women and determined their role and position in society." <sup>14</sup>

This control is exemplified in the plot movements of Rowson's novel, most of which are initiated by men. Temple comes to the rescue of Lucy and her father, whereas Montraville carries Charlotte off to another country, abandons her, and avenges her death. The men are the actors and aggressors; the women are essentially passive. Even Mrs. Beauchamp, Charlotte's rescuer, waits for her husband's approval before she leaves her home to help Charlotte. <sup>15</sup>

Rowson portrays this ideal of the woman as homebound through Charlotte's mother, Lucy Temple. Lucy perceives the maintenance of a peaceful home as the central "duty of a wife." Despite the loss of her daughter, she must hide her own suffering to

"alleviate the sufferings" of her husband and father by smiling and bringing cheer. <sup>16</sup> Lucy's role as redeemer began in childhood, when she was the "angel" who comforted and supported her father. <sup>17</sup> Later, after her marriage, her husband and father reap the domestic bliss of Lucy's "serene countenance" in the retirement of their cottage. <sup>18</sup>

Lucy, like her daughter, is a "bud of innocence" in need of male protection from "adversity... insult and dishonour." <sup>19</sup> She displays the proper morality and domestic purity through the "meek affection and submissive duty of the wife," <sup>20</sup> while her daughter displays an ideal moral virtue and innocence by piously attending church and blushing as would "the sweetest girl" at a man's gaze. <sup>21</sup>

Women's physical separation from the world within the domestic ideal thus established and reinforced society's view of women as morally superior to men, who were expected to protect them from the male sphere of corrupting monetary power. This view also strengthened the males' sexual and economic identity, which depended on women's fidelity to support the other gender's role as controller and caretaker of their legal progeny and heirs. Therefore, while women

were expected morally to police men's sexual behavior and control their own, males were literally "men of the world" <sup>22</sup> as they held access to the economy as well as sexual knowledge.

This societal structure was perpetuated by children's training for their social role, which in turn was determined by sexual gender. Rowson reveals this self-perpetuating system through the senior Montraville's differentiation between his sons and his daughters in his preparation for their adulthood:

He was obliged to bring his sons up to genteel professions, by the exercise of which they might hope to raise themselves into notice....: my boys, with only moderate incomes, when placed in the church, at the bar, or in the field, may exert their talents, make themselves friends, and raise their fortunes on the basis of merit. <sup>23</sup>

The father is interested in increasing the monetary value of his sons as future controllers of the economy. In contrast, his daughters are separated from the world to be educated

like gentlewomen; and should I die before they they must have some provisions made, to place them above the snares and temptations which vice ever holds out to the elegant, accomplished female, when oppressed by the frowns of poverty and the sting of dependence. <sup>24</sup>

Rowson presents such an isolated education in her description of Madame Du Pont's students. Madame Du

Pont possessed "conversation and morals... exactly such as parents of delicacy and refinement would wish a daughter to copy." <sup>25</sup> Her students obviously had acquired some of the ideal feminine traits, for they transfix their male onlookers as they leave church behind their teacher:

Such an assemblage of youth and innocence naturally affected the young soldiers; they stopped; and as the little cavalcade passed, almost involuntarily pulled off their hats. <sup>26</sup>

The men's respectful attitude is an indication of the privileged position society gives morally pure and innocent women to ensure they wish to retain that status.

The fact that Charlotte was seduced at school reflects Rowson's belief that women's traditional education is insufficient training for the value systems they will in fact encounter. Rather, such an education perpetuates the social structure, and Charlotte Temple works against it by reiterating the need for a proper education in the ways of the world. <sup>27</sup>

In addition to educational reform, Rowson emphasizes the role of the parents in protecting their daughter's morality. Parents, who have weathered and

survived marriage and the market with moral and monetary value presumably intact, should be able to give their daughter proper training. However, a father's interest in monetary value may be uppermost in parental advice to his daughters. Rowson's warning to "listen not to the voice of love, unless sanctioned by paternal approbation" admits the crucial importance of economic advantage. 28

## II

Proper schooling and parental guidance are Rowson's recommended weapons for the introduction of worldly knowledge, although only to the extent that women can be made aware of the dangers that could undermine their moral value. Even this modest approach, which worked through the socially approved messengers of education and parental influence, required numerous disclaimers and reassurances to matrons so as not to displease society's moral censors. 29 Her moralistic, melodramatic style, which appealed to the social language that women--and men--understood, appeased those censors in order to convey Rowson's "Tale of Truth." 30 Charlotte herself may have been fiction, but the social instrument that destroyed her was real.

Seduction was an indication of women's lesser social status, as well as the difficulties which occur when "moral value and social responsibility are outweighed by the particular desires of privileged individuals or classes." <sup>31</sup> Charlotte Temple depicts men as the "privileged class;" in relations between the sexes they are the "privileged individual," whose seduction of women is a reflection of the "baseness of those who call themselves the masters of creation." <sup>32</sup> Yet, the women who succumbed to them, like Charlotte, are deemed the guilty parties by society. <sup>33</sup> It is this transferral of social and sexual guilt which Charlotte's seduction highlights.

Marriage is also presented as a privileged state for men--a means of consolidating and reinforcing monetary value through possessions brought by a bride. But for women, it is the only access to their status in the economic system, for which they rely on their moral value for entry. Montraville values Charlotte because she is innocent, pure, modest and retiring. <sup>34</sup> These same values attracted Mr. Temple to Lucy. Even Mademoiselle La Rue, who possesses none of these qualities, assumes them to gain access to marriage. <sup>35</sup>

Marriage was the expected destiny of all women. It was their domain, the place where they expected, like Lucy, to extend their moral influence. It was also their point of entry into economic support of the family and the nation. The status of marriage as portrayed in the novel is such that the marital "relationship is related to the market economy, where, in Marxist terms, exchange values have replaced use values. Women... absorb the commodity status of the objects they consume." <sup>36</sup> Thus, marriage, for which women have saved their "moral" value, is itself reduced to a market commodity. This invasion of monetary values into the moral sphere is an irony which lies at the center of marriage. The act of marriage, like seduction, is a devaluation and subversion of the moral standard, in the sense that women's moral value could be reduced by husbands and fathers to a form of legal tender in the money market.

Although a woman's moral values are portrayed as her best investment toward marriage, her monetary value (her dowry) frequently determines her actual opportunity for marriage. Miss Weatherby and Julia, both unusual because they are each an "independent mistress" of a fortune, are surrounded by suitors



eager to end the women's independent control of their money.<sup>37</sup> On the other end of the financial scale, the only reason Mr. Lewis would not offer Lucy Eldridge the security of marriage is her insufficient assets.<sup>38</sup> The same reason lies at the root of Montraville's rejection of marriage to Charlotte, who has no fortune to satisfy Montraville's father.<sup>39</sup> Charlotte and Lucy have the moral prerequisites which society (and Rowson) idealize, but their lack of money undermines their moral wealth in men's eyes.

Once 18th-Century women married, they had virtually no more legal rights than they had as daughters. They existed as "femes covert"; that is, they were literally "covered women," invisible to the law.<sup>40</sup> They were thus still separated from direct control of the economy and the world, although they were financially secure as long as their husbands wisely controlled their assets. They could not make a will beyond the one-third widow's rights which common law allowed them, and they could not inherit. Their signature did not carry any weight, which prevented any freedom to make contracts and run a business.<sup>41</sup> Before marriage, a woman was typically considered the property of her father<sup>42</sup>, while a married woman,

"with some notable exceptions, ... typically lost her property upon marriage." 43 Also, a woman was often subject to "avaricious parents who essentially sell their daughter into an economically advantageous marriage." 44 Rowson herself is an example of the impact of these legal and social customs. She could not accept payment for her own work on her novels from her publisher; her husband accepted it for her. 45

Despite this lack of individual identity and economic influence, however, most women still chose marriage; for a single woman was more than economically crippled. She was also a social outcast, a "moral horror" in a society which had made no room for her in its social and economic system. 46 With such social and legal restrictions against their self-identity, women naturally considered marriage as the most important decision of their lives, for the social state which continued to erase a woman's existence in a legal sense also provided her the surest chance for social acceptance in the relative moral and monetary security of marriage. It was also the safest position for her children, because illegitimate children, existing without the stamp of approval from an

acknowledged father, were not legally and financially recognized by society. 47

The moral restraints imposed on daughters remained after marriage on wives. As long as a wife retained her moral value, she maintained her social status. However, her husband, who had access to both value systems, was freer than she could ever be:

The dutious, faithful wife, though treated with indifference, has one solid pleasure within her own bosom, she can reflect that she has not deserved neglect--that she has fulfilled the duties of her station with the strictest exactness; she may hope, by constant assiduity and unremitted attention, to recall her wanderer, and be doubly happy in his returning affections; she knows he cannot leave her to unite himself to another: he cannot cast her out to poverty and contempt; she looks around her, and sees the smile of friendly welcome, or the tear of affectionate consolation, on the face of every person whom she favors with her esteem; and from all these circumstances she gathers comfort. 48

In contrast, the woman who has engaged in sexual relations outside of marriage has no social status or approval; she has bankrupted the moral values which society ascribed to her, and has robbed herself of any chance in the marriage market. Unlike her lover, who has far less to lose by gambling moral value, she will be

the poor girl by thoughtless passion led astray, who, in parting with her honour, has forfeited the esteem of the very man

to whom she has sacrificed everything dear and valuable in life, feels his indifference in the fruit of her own folly. 49

The man to whom she has given "everything," as Charlotte does, will have little respect for her since she has not held out for the prime bargain of marriage:

Alas! when once a woman has forgot the respect due to herself, by yielding to the solicitations of illicit love, they lose all their consequence, even in the eyes of the man whose art has betrayed them, and for whose sake they have sacrificed every valuable consideration... every libertine will think he has a right to insult her with his licentious passion; and should the unhappy creature shrink from the insolent overture, he will sneeringly taunt her with pretense of modesty. 50

When the 18th-Century woman has lost her value on the moral market, a man may feel free to approach her, since he perceives her as sexually accessible. And, since she is damaged goods in society's eyes, she can gain no economic security from her lover:

...he may marry and forsake her forever; and should he, she has no redress... she has disgraced her friends, forfeited the good opinion of the world, and undone herself. 51

While seduction spelled the forfeiture of a single woman's social moral value, fallen women (fallen in value) also threatened married women. Seduction depreciated their moral value and undermined the status of marriage, which was women's toehold of

access into men's economic security. Thus, fearing a loss of economic value, women rejected or held in contempt those who had not retained their moral value. Their attitude toward fallen women was quite antagonistic, and a seduced woman would have "no kind friend of her own sex to whom she can unbosom her griefs... no woman of character will appear in (her) company...." 52 "Even the woman who dares to pity, and endeavor to recall a wandering sister, incurs the sneer of contempt and ridicule." 53

This distrustful attitude extended not only to "wandering sisters" but to all women. While women identified with their own sex in social bonds and relations, they were their own worst enemies in the competition for economic standing through marriage. Due to their precarious stock in monetary values, they were mutually unsupportive and destructive in their moral sphere.

As part of her efforts to instill more moral concepts in young women, Rowson urges them to help, not condemn, other women who have fallen from the standard:

Believe me, many an unfortunate female, who has once strayed into the thorny paths of vice, would gladly return to virtue, was any generous friend to endeavor to raise and

re-assure her; but alas! it cannot be, you say; the world would deride and scoff. Then let me tell you, Madam, 'tis a very unfeeling world, and does not deserve half the blessing which a bountiful Providence showers upon it. 54

She also reminds women of the frailty of their moral stock:

My dear Madam, contract not your brow into a frown of disapprobation. I mean not to extenuate the faults of those unhappy women who fall victims to guilt and folly; but surely, when we reflect how many errors we ourselves are subject to, how many secret faults lie hid in the recesses of our hearts, which we should blush to have brought into open day... we may surely pity the faults of others. 55

Rowson here again subverts the social system, for women who would follow her advice would no longer contribute to society's devaluation of the victims of seduction, with the result that the moral value system imposed on women becomes more at risk.

### III

While always emphasizing women's moral territory, Rowson indirectly highlights men's contrasting moral behavior. Although her male characters frequently speak or act in moral interests, their behavior is either guided by monetary concerns or based on their sense of a woman's moral value. The men also frequently confuse or equate the possession of one value with another, as when Mr. Lewis is assumed to be as benevolent as he is wealthy by the

Eldridge family.<sup>56</sup> Also, the soldier whom Charlotte questions also equates Montraville's possession of money through his wealthy wife with a high level of morality.<sup>57</sup> This confusion may have been due to 18th-Century men's tendency to invest their moral values in women, as when Mr. Crayton took Mademoiselle La Rue for his wife. He gives her his protection, declaring, "her honour henceforth is mine."<sup>58</sup> Lucy's and Charlotte's fathers also regarded their daughters' or wives' moral virtue as both their possessions and as more fragile than their own moral standing. The most blatant example of this attitude lies in Montraville's behavior toward Charlotte and Belcour. As a member of the sex which possesses economic and sexual power, Belcour is free to ask Montraville, "How could I refuse the girl's advances?,"<sup>59</sup> and thus free himself from any moral loss. Although Montraville is enraged by the thought that Charlotte has displayed an interest in Belcour, he is unaware of the parallels between her supposed behavior and his own. He has not been faithful to Charlotte in his feelings for Julia, yet the thought that Charlotte could be unfaithful to him is enough to cause him to reject her. Like the unfaithful woman whom other women feared, Charlotte

has seemingly subverted the value system by taking a man's freedom to ignore morality and by challenging the paternal power structure. By "seducing" Belcour, who had no moral restraint to refuse her, she has preempted Montraville's initiative and undercut his control of the relationship. Charlotte is thus guiltier in Montraville's eyes than is Belcour. Montraville forgives him after only a slight hesitation, <sup>60</sup> even though he knows Belcour may go so far as to prevent Charlotte's return to the moral standard. <sup>61</sup>

Since men do not rely completely on the moral value system for social status, they are freer to disregard the consequences of their actions, as when

Montraville concluded it was impossible he should ever marry Charlotte Temple ... what end he proposed to himself by continuing the acquaintance he had commenced with her, he did not at that moment give himself time to enquire. <sup>62</sup>

Since Montraville is allowed by family and society to be "eager and impetuous in his pursuit of a favorite object, he staid not to reflect on the consequence of what might follow the attainment of his wishes." <sup>63</sup> Although men were encouraged by society to ascribe to moral values in order to empower the overall value structure, they were not harshly



punished by society when they failed to do so. But women, who would be committing a greater social sin by their fall, must be punished more harshly for society's own protection. Charlotte thus literally receives the death sentence. George and Belcour are also killed, but they are killed by other men over women whose moral value (which was regarded as the men's possession) was threatened or lost. George fights for his sister, for "the insult offered to a man and a soldier." <sup>64</sup> Montraville ostensibly kills Belcour for his abandonment of Charlotte, but Belcour's death is plausibly repayment for Montraville's own loss of moral standing. Montraville is presented as suffering lifelong regret for his treatment of Charlotte, but his societal status never suffers. His remorse, however, does reinforce moral standards and women's role in society as "that sex whose morals and conduct have so powerful an influence on mankind in general." <sup>65</sup>

Montraville's moral virtue still remains in question; even his professed love for Julia leaves open the question as to how much of his feelings for her are really a reaction to her wealth. When he first meets her, he emphasizes that jewels have

brought him to an amiable lady. As their relationship develops to the point where marriage becomes likely, he states, "I have been mistaken; I imagined I loved Charlotte: but alas! I am now too late convinced my attachment to her was merely the impulse of the moment." <sup>66</sup> How much of his conviction was based on affection for Julia, and how much was based on her money?

Rowson theorizes that if Charlotte's letters to Montraville had reached him, "they must, though on the very eve of marriage, have prevented his deserting the wretched girl." <sup>67</sup> The word "must" is far more a projection of morality than of Montraville's actual behavior. He might have deserted Charlotte even if the letters had reached him. He may have given her more money, but he would still have married Julia. Julia has the fortune, both in moral and economic coin, which will not only assure his father's approval but his financial gift.

#### IV

Although Rowson encourages a rejection of monetary values in favor of moral virtues, <sup>68</sup> her novel works against this advice in its portrayal of Charlotte's father. Mr. Temple, disillusioned with

the worldly values his father taught him, becomes a social misfit by overinvesting in moral values. He vows to "forget there are such things as splendor, profusion, and dissipation" <sup>69</sup> because he has seen his family's contentment sacrificed in the pursuit of wealth:

He saw his elder brother made completely wretched by marrying a disagreeable woman, whose fortune helped to prop up the sinking dignity of the house; and he beheld his sisters legally prostituted to old, decrepid men, whose titles gave them consequence in the eyes of the world, and whose affluence rendered them splendidly miserable. <sup>70</sup>

In reaction to this, Temple then declares:

I will not sacrifice internal happiness for outward shew... I will seek content; and, if I find her in a cottage, will embrace her with as much cordiality, as I should if seated on a throne. <sup>71</sup>

Unfortunately, Mr. Temple's aversion to monetary values extends to the neglect of his parental training of his daughter, and Charlotte's resultant naivete leads to her destruction.

Mademoiselle La Rue, whom Rowson uses to show the dangers of completely abandoning moral virtue, is arguably one of the more successful female characters until she abuses monetary values through "riot, dissipation and vice." <sup>72</sup> Like Mr. Temple, she is a social misfit. She wastes little time investing in

morals; in her pursuit of economic security, she falls back on the moral system only when she has no other recourse. Reduced by her careless lifestyle to financial destitution, she then substitutes high moral values in the place of money, claiming moral purity in order to gain a teaching position at the girls' school which Charlotte attends. However, as soon as she is secure in this station, she once again seeks to gain monetary value through Belcour.<sup>73</sup> She returns to this pattern again when she pursues Crayton for his "favour and protection" and "her honour henceforth"<sup>74</sup> after realizing that Belcour will not support her. Then, believing herself secure, La Rue dares "to look with an eye of contempt on the unfortunate but far less guilty Charlotte", who, unlike La Rue, has not achieved marriage.<sup>75</sup>

At her death, La Rue proclaims, "it was but just that I should experience those miseries myself which I had unfeelingly inflicted on others,"<sup>76</sup> and her end is presented as a "striking example that vice, however prosperous in the beginning, in the end leads only to misery and shame."<sup>77</sup> La Rue may be penitent, but she has resorted to morality in desperation before. Her "repentance" gains her security, as it has in the

past, but she is too close to death to take advantage of it.

Rowson's moral message is seemingly reinforced and justified by La Rue's desperate penitence, Charlotte's deathbed reunion with her forgiving father, and Montraville's remorse. However, these conclusions are not resolutions of the story; instead, they expose its instabilities. The innocent Charlotte dies, Montraville lives on with his wife, and Mademoiselle La Rue's resumption of morality may be only playacting. Rowson's advocacy of finding contentment through "Humility, Filial Piety, Conjugal Affection, Industry, and Benevolence"--for "Pleasure is a vain illusion" 78--is contradicted by such a conclusion, as well as her own words. She continually reminds readers that people who cultivate monetary value rise to social power and influence while those who value the priority of the moral system are disregarded (as are daughters and wives) or threatened with destruction. For example, she notes how an ensign of "mean birth, indifferent education, and weak intellects" can rise to "posts of honor." She acknowledges that

...fortune is blind, and so are those too frequently who have the power of dispensing

her favours: else why do we see fools and knaves at the very top of the wheel, while patient merit sinks to the extreme of the opposite abyss. But we may form a thousand conjectures on this subject, and yet never hit on the right. Let us therefore endeavor to deserve her smiles, and whether we succeed or not, we shall feel more innate satisfaction, than thousands of those who bask in the sunshine of her favour unworthily. <sup>79</sup>

The gap between her moral message and the economic reality she conveys underscores the actual relation between the two standards. Moral values are indeed women's safest recourse, but not for Rowson's stated reasons. Rowson tells her readers,

Content... will blunt even the arrows of adversity, so they cannot materially harm you. She will dwell in the humblest cottage; she will attend you even to a prison. Her parent is Religion; her sisters, Patience and Hope. She will pass with you through life, smoothing the rough paths and...lead you triumphant to a blissfull eternity. <sup>80</sup>

But before "blissfull eternity" is the fact that morals, although continuously devalued by society, are still necessary for women's security. They are women's source of survival in the midst of male power and economic influence. Conversely, society's survival--and men's control of it--depends on women's participation and support of the existing system. Women must learn to work within that system, using its guides of religion, content, patience and hope, to

maintain their safety while increasing their security and standing.

Through Charlotte's experiences in the novel, women could become aware of their status in society and the restrictions inherent within it. An awareness of this view could allow them to use it to their best interests, thereby securing their place by valuing themselves sufficiently so "no woman could be run away with contrary to her own inclination." <sup>81</sup> Conversely, it increased male readers' awareness of women's moral influence in society and encouraged their support of moral values as women's source of social status. It is this knowledge of one's own status and place in the world to which Mrs. Rowson referred when she wrote:

Teach them [young women] the difference between right and wrong, and convince their reason, by pointing out the real way to promote their own happiness. <sup>82</sup>

Rowson's "right and wrong" are simply the parameters of acceptable behavior within the value structure of society. Her guide to greater investment in moral values for her readers' success may have been the reason for the novel's popularity. While it did not gain critical approval, its message provided "society with a means of thinking about itself, defining...a social reality" which Rowson shared with

her readers, "dramatizing its conflicts, and recommending solutions." 83 Thus Charlotte Temple succeeded in questioning the division and subversion of social values between the sexes without exceeding the safe limits of society's approval.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: Stein and Day, 1966) 83.

<sup>2</sup> Henri Petter, The Early American Novel (Columbus: Ohio State University, 1971) 23.

<sup>3</sup> Fiedler, 97.

<sup>4</sup> Petter, 22.

<sup>5</sup> Cathy N. Davidson. Introduction. Charlotte Temple. By Susanna Rowson. New York: Oxford UP, 1986. xxvii.

<sup>6</sup> Susanna Rowson. Preface. Charlotte Temple. 5.

<sup>1</sup> Rowson, Preface. 6.

<sup>8</sup> Cathy N. Davidson, Revolution and the Word (New York: Oxford UP, 1986) 8.

<sup>9</sup> Davidson, 114.

<sup>10</sup> This conclusion, however, has been challenged by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich in "Martha Ballard and Her Girls: Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Maine," in Work and Labor in Early America, edited by Stephen James (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988) 70-105.

<sup>11</sup> Nina Baym, Woman's Fiction (New York: Cornell University, 1978) 27.

<sup>12</sup> Baym, 168.

<sup>13</sup> Jane Tompkins, Sensational Designs (New York: Oxford UP, 1985) 27.

<sup>14</sup> Tony Tanner, Adultery in the Novel (Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1979) 64.

- 15 Rowson, 75.
- 16 Rowson, 56.
- 17 Rowson, 12.
- 18 Rowson, 25.
- 19 Rowson, 14.
- 21 Rowson, 10.
- 22 Rowson, 25, 61.
- 23 Rowson, 39-40.
- 24 Rowson, 39-40.
- 25 Rowson, 26.
- 26 Rowson, 10.
- 27 Rowson, 6, 28-29.
- 28 Rowson, 29.
- 29 Rowson, 6, 28, 67-68.
- 31 Davidson, 108.
- 32 Davidson, 106.
- 33 Davidson, 106, 107.
- 34 Rowson, 9, 42.
- 35 Rowson, 58-59.
- 36 Tanner, 74.
- 37 Rowson, 24, 68.
- 38 Rowson, 17.
- 39 Rowson, 41.
- 41 Davidson, 118.

42 Davidson, 118.

43 Davidson, 118.

44 Davidson, 118.

45 Davidson, p. 8.

46 Dorothy Weil, In Defense of Women: Susanna Rowson (1762-1824) (University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1976) 35.

47 Davidson, 106, 116.

48 Rowson, 66.

49 Rowson, 66-67.

51 Rowson, 67.

52 Rowson, 65.

53 Rowson, 74.

54 Rowson, 68.

55 Rowson, 67-68.

56 Rowson, 16.

57 Rowson, 107.

58 Rowson, 60.

59 Rowson, 87.

61 Rowson, 94.

62 Rowson, 41.

63 Rowson, 38.

64 Rowson, 17.

65 Rowson. Preface. 6.

66 Rowson, 70.

- 67 Rowson, 94.
- 68 Rowson, 34-35.
- 69 Rowson, 25.
- 71 Rowson, 12.
- 72 Rowson, 119.
- 73 Rowson, 26-27.
- 74 Rowson, 60.
- 75 Rowson, 62.
- 76 Rowson, 119.
- 77 Rowson, 120.
- 78 Rowson, 34.
- 79 Rowson, 100.
- 81 Rowson, 29.
- 82 Patricia L. Parker, Susanna Rowson (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986) 47.
- 83 Tompkins, 193.

VITA

Elise Anne Rowe [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the daughter of Virginia [REDACTED]. After graduating from Saint Francis Academy, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1976, she attended the University of Pittsburgh in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, where she received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in May 1980. She worked in retail management positions for two years, then enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. She worked in public affairs at Moody Air Force Base, Georgia, until September, 1982. She then received her commission and was stationed at Dyess AFB, Texas, as the squadron section commander of the 96th Supply Squadron. In January, 1988, she entered the University of Texas under the sponsorship of the Air Force Institute of Technology in preparation for an instructorship at the Air Force Academy.

Permanent address: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

This report was typed by Elise Anne Rowe